



★ ★ 15 BIG ACTION-PACKED THRILLERS ★ ★

- 1) **CAGED** L. D. Geumlek 3
Never again to see a bighorn sheep, proud and wild, on a dawn-touched crag—What the devil kind of a thought was that for a notorious killer to have?
 - 2) **A GUNFIGHTER'S DECISION** Philip Morgan 6
If cattlemen were so tough, then let them prove it, was Dan Thompson's argument. A young fool had let a pretty face turn him against his own kind, the ranchers raged.
 - 3) **THE OLD SIX SHOOTER** James P. Webb 13
The flame-tressed woman wore a gun, for one thing. And Bristow didn't think a man would just up and walk away from his place without his saddle....
 - 4) **RED SKY IN THE EVENING** Rod Patterson 18
The shooting and the hollering wasn't what worried Carnes now. It was the thing that had happened two nights back in the willow brakes along the creek. .
 - 5) **ALL'S FAIR** Vern Carr 27
All two-bit rancher Ed Prentiss asked of the world was to make landhog Ab Pike crawl once—just the once....
 - 6) **MAIN EVENT** Bill Burchardt 32
If he didn't have the guts to top a tough bront, Vic Riley wondered where he'd ever get the nerve to face a hardcase with a running iron in one hand and a sixgun in the other....
 - 7) **SOMEBODY TO TAME THE KID** Ed La Vanway 38
It didn't look like any man was ever going to make Mark Vanton put away his gun. Maybe a woman could....
 - 8) **THE ONE TO DO IT** J. G. Ritchie 44
Riding back through that fateful night, I knew I never should have tried to kill a man; not even a rat like Jim Bailey....
 - 9) **MY BROTHER: KILLER** H. A. DeRosso 46
Two men held up the stage and killed Bisbee Johnson, I told Dad, and Rory and me rode after them and finished them off. What else could I tell him?
 - 10) **THEY THREW DICE FOR THEIR LIVES** Noel M. Loomis 54
The early West was a place where a man could not be sure of burial in boothill....
- ★ ★ ANTHOLOGY OF WESTERN CLASSICS ★ ★
- 11) **STALKERS OF THE STORM** Gunnison Steele 62
The hunger to kill surged fiercely inside Two-Toes, the timber wolf, but a greater savagery held the giant wild beast in check... copyright 1948, Newsstand Publications, Inc.
 - 12) **BATTLECUB'S SIX-GUN REDEMPTION** James Shaffer 67
Yellow, that's what the kid was, and he knew it—afraid he'd get a bellyful of lead, afraid he'd be dead, in his tracks before he could get his gun clear of leather.... copyright 1943, Manvis Publications, Inc.
 - 13) **LUCKY LEAD SLAMMER OR GUN KING?** Peter Dawson 75
They'd brand Russ Ordway owlhoot and rustler one day, and then Russ would get his chance to rid the range of its most ruthless landhog. copyright 1941, Newsstand Publications, Inc.
 - 14) **BULLET FOR BULLET** Fredric Brown 85
The owlhooters allowed how the loco graybeard might bullet-nick a rattlesnake's left eye at a hundred paces—but not with an empty gun! copyright 1941, Manvis Publications, Inc.
 - 15) **TINBADGE WHO SIDED THE BACKSHOOTER** Norman A. Fox 91
Riding double, the sheriff and his gunwolf prisoner could never outdistance that lynch mob's bounty bullets.... copyright 1938, Newsstand Publications, Inc.

THE ONE TO DO IT

by J. G. RITCHIE

I TIED THE roan to a jacaranda tree, slipped the Winchester carbine from the saddle scabbard, and walked cautiously toward their campfire four hundred yards away. There was only a faint rim of moon and I kept within the shadows of the manzanita and chamisal. When I was fifty yards away I stopped and went down to a prone firing position. I wanted the carbine to rest steady. I wanted one shot to do the job of killing Jim Bailey.

He and Ed Hover were alone and they hunkered about the burning mesquite chunks eating from tin plates. Bailey's back was toward me and I lined him in

the sights of my carbine. My finger slipped into the trigger guard and rested on the trigger. I could shoot now, I thought, and it would be all over. I could go back to my father's ranch knowing that now my brother's murderer was dead.

But I hesitated and waited for him to turn around. From ambush was the last chance I would get to kill him, but I didn't want to shoot him in the back.

They were talking softly and I listened to the murmur of their voices while I waited. I could see the silhouette of the holstered .44 Frontier Colt that had killed at least four men in the years Bailey had spent in Elwood.

And yet Jim Bailey was free to walk without fear of the law because according to the citizen witnesses of Elwood they were fair fights. But to me and those of us who did more thinking about it, Bailey was the kind who never drew a gun against a man

Riding back through that fateful night, I knew I never should have tried to kill a man; not even a rat like Jim Bailey....

who was his equal. He did his gunning against ranch-hands who were more used to a lariat in their hands than a six-shooter.

My finger rested on the trigger



He had killed my brother because Bill had made two mistakes. He had played cards with Bailey and had watched the deal too closely.

They sent me word about Bill and I went to town with two of the ranch-hands. They lifted Bill's body into the buckboard and we brought him back to our place. We buried him in the fenced plot where our mother had been put to rest five years ago.

It was a dark day with the wind pulling at our clothes and father sat in his wheelchair listening to the preacher's last words and watching his son lowered into the ground.

I saw his hopeless eyes and I knew then what I had to do and I knew that I was the only one left to do it. There were just the two of us now and father hadn't walked since the steel-dust threw him.

AFTER THE services I went back to the ranchhouse and changed clothes. I waited until the late afternoon when father took his nap, and then I strapped Bill's gun to my waist and tied the holsters down. I took four boxes of ammunition and

rode out onto the range until I was out of earshot of the house.

And then I began practicing with the Colt. I'd been born on the ranch and been out hunting with father ever since I could walk. But with rifles and shotguns; I'd never worn a six-gun.

I was slow at first and wild when I fired, but I kept at it. I kept at it until I had used the four boxes of ammunition and I was back the next day with four more. I practiced daily for three weeks, improving slowly at first and then becoming more expert until finally I knew that I was ready.

In the evening I rode into town and left my mount at the hitchrack in front of the Mesa Saloon. When I walked into the place it was filled with the noise of the drinkers and the shrill voices of the girls. I stood with my back to the swinging doors, looking for Bailey.

The loud talk drifted to silence as I was noticed. For a moment some of them might have wanted to laugh, but they saw my face and they knew I was serious. Their eyes went from me to where Jim Bailey sat over a layout of seven card stud.

He looked up as I came toward him and for a second he stared in disbelief. Then he grinned.

I stopped a dozen feet from him. "There's nothing to grin about," I said. "I'm here to kill you."

But he still smiled and near the bar somebody laughed nervously.

My hand dropped to my gun and brought it out in a motion that elicited a gasp from the spectators. For the space of ten seconds I leveled the barrel of the .41 Colt Lightning at Bailey's forehead and then re-holstered the gun.

"You can see I mean business and it won't be easy for you," I said.

His smile was thinner and he shook his head. "I can't draw on you. You know that."

"I'm not leaving until you do," I said. "Maybe it'll help if I tell you that you're a cheating tinhorn and a coward."

The smile disappeared completely and a glitter came to his eyes. "Think up all the words you want and enjoy them. But you won't get me to draw."

We stared at each other and I knew that nothing I could say or do would make him go for his gun. I knew I couldn't shoot him here if he didn't. I was angry enough to, I thought, but I couldn't do it in front of witnesses. It would mean jail and possibly even hanging for me.

I felt sick inside as I spun around and walked out without another word. The laughter began as I reached the doors and it was a roar as I mounted my horse.

FOR THE NEXT few weeks I did my work at the ranchhouse, and when I heard that Bailey was leaving for Laramie I waited outside of town until I saw him from where I was hidden.

I'd expected him to be alone, but Ed Hover, another man of Bailey's breed, rode with him. I was undecided what to do and I let them pass me and ride out of sight.

I had wanted to meet Bailey face to face and alone, where he knew he had to draw or die. But Ed Hover made it different and I realized that there was only one way I could get at Bailey before he slipped away forever. I had to shoot him from the darkness where no man could prove who had killed him. I rowelled my team and followed their trail...

And now I waited in the darkness as Jim Bailey cleaned his plate and cup with sand, and rose. He was facing me now and I put my cheek against the stock of the carbine and sighted. I felt justified anger and my finger wanted to squeeze the trigger. I wanted to see him dead and yet a dampness crept into my hands.

Bailey moved and once again his back was toward me and the moment was lost. I put my head on my arm and felt tears trickle down my cheeks. The time had come and gone and I knew now that I couldn't kill him.

I lay there for a while with despair gnawing at my heart and then I got up. I was about to leave when I looked back at them and stopped.

I noticed the way Ed Hover's eyes followed Bailey as Bailey paced back and forth in front of the fire. There was something in those eyes that told
(please turn to page 58)

THE ONE TO DO IT

me he was waiting for something.

Bailey went to where his saddle bags lay on the ground and he kneeled down over them, his hands at the straps. His back was toward Hover and I might even have shouted a warning if there had been time.

Ed Hover's gun pointed at Bailey's back and he fired.

Bailey lurched forward on his face as the bullet struck. Hover walked carefully to his body and rolled him over. He reached inside of Bailey's

(cont'd from page 45)

shirt and unbuckled the fat money belt.

I watched him saddle up and ride away and then I returned to my mount, shivering at what I had seen and what I had almost done.

I rode slowly back through the night knowing that I could never kill a man and never should have tried. I was going to be glad to get out of levis and back into a dress and once more be only a daughter and housekeeper for my father. ● END